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COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Superintendent's Proposed Budget Meeting

Wednesday, February 19, 2025
6:00 PM
William J. Johnston Middle School Blackbox Theatre

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT : Chair Donna Antonacci, Vice-Chair Christopher Rivers, Secretary Margo Gignac,, Michelle Millington, Rosemary Gignac and Stefanie Tracey-Calash.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT : Superintendent Daniel P. Sullivan, III, Director of Pupil Services Eve Hurley, Assistant Director of Pupil Services Rebecca Tedesco, Bacon Academy (BA) Principal Amy Begué, BA Assistant Principal Melissa Cyr, BA Assistant Principal Michael Mal, William J Johnston Middle School (WJJMS) Principal Christopher Bennett, WJJMS Assistant Principal Stacey Ewings, Jack Jackter Intermediate School (JJIS) Principal Elise Butson, JJIS Assistant Principal Jennifer Reynolds, Colchester Elementary School (CES) Assistant Principal Meghan Amado.

OTHERS PRESENT : Director of Finance and Operations Rachel Linkkila, Instructional Technology Coordinator Barbara Johnson, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent Alyssa Fratoni.

1. **MEETING OPENING**
   1.1. Call to Order
   Chair Antonacci called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM

   1.2 Roll Call
   Chair Antonacci, M.Gignac, S.Tracey-Calash and M.Millington present in person at time of Roll Call. Vice-Chair Rivers, A.Oliphant and R.Gignac not present at time of Roll Call.

   1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

2. ***PRIORITY DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS**
   2.1. Budget Presentation: Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 Budget
R.Gignac arrived at 6:12PM
Vice-Chair Rivers arrived at 6:20PM

Superintendent Sullivan presented the Proposed Budget for 2025-2026, emphasizing the theme "An Investment in Student Futures." He reviewed the total number of students, certified staff, and non-certified staff in the district as of October 1, 2024, and outlined key decision-making factors, including legal obligations, what is best for students and staff, and local priorities.

He highlighted district accomplishments over the past year, including elementary reading and math improvements, recognitions at WJJMS and BA, HVAC inspections now being conducted

in-house, and the daycare at CES. He also outlined the next steps for the district, which include completing the Vision of the Graduate, implementing the K-12 Literacy Plan, and introducing the new schedule at WJJMS.

Superintendent Sullivan discussed positive returns on investment, citing academic performance, school safety, student support, and student development. He outlined the proposed new positions, including a 1.0 FTE Elementary Teacher, 2.0 FTE Nurses, and a 1.0 FTE School Safety Officer/Director.

He reviewed the budget drivers, which include salaries and benefits, special education, facility maintenance, transportation contracts, and athletics and student activities. Several funding requests were unmet, including a Facilities Supervisor and vehicle, a special education teacher, and a Pre-K Coordinator. He also noted that grant funding for the district has decreased by nearly $200,000 over the past two years.

The total proposed budget for 2025-2026 is $47,868,304, reflecting a 5.03% increase from 2024-2025. Initially, the anticipated increase was 3.83%, but unexpected expenses—such as a 10% increase in electricity costs, additional AEDs, the BA theater project, reductions in Title I funding, and the health reserve account increase—resulted in a higher percentage.

Superintendent Sullivan outlined what is included in the budget, such as demolition at BA, choral risers and instruments, and BA Theater AV upgrades. Items that were not funded include tree removal, various maintenance revisions at all schools, engineered drawings for emergency access, and network and battery backup improvements.

Vice-Chair Rivers asked that the Administration compare Colchester's spending to all 145 Districts in CT. He also asked if the presentation that was just presented was on the website, Superintendent Sullivan stated that it would be put on the website for the public to view tomorrow, February 20, 2025.

S.Tracey-Calash is looking forward to getting into the details.

M.Millington thanked the Administration for the presentation, stating that it was well done.

Vice-Chair Rivers is looking forward to the more detailed line item breakout and asked when that could be expected? R.Linkkila stated that it would be posted tomorrow, February 20, 2025.

Chair Antonacci asked what budgets would be looked at during the workshops.

2/25/2025 - CES, JJIS, Pupil Services, General Operating and Transportation

2/27/2025 - BA, WJJMS, Athletics, Facilities and Technology

M.Gignac thanked Superintendent Sullivan, R.Linkkila and all Administration for their work.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

3.1. Public Comment on the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 Budget.

Matthew Parsons, Taylor Road - thanked everyone involved in the budget process. He noted that the JJIS playground is currently out of the budget and highlighted the frequent use of the playground and seating areas, especially during spring sports. He encouraged exploring potential solutions to address these needs.

Mary Tomasi, Diane Lane - via Zoom, acknowledged the challenges of budgeting, noting her experience serving on the Board of Education for several years. She highlighted the impact of rising energy costs on schools and recalled discussions from a few years ago regarding solar panels or solar farms. She inquired about the status of those efforts. The Board stated that the topic would be discussed at Tuesday's Budget Workshop.

Cindy Nonewicz, Brainard Road - stated she is a district nurse and thanked everyone for their work on the budget. She noted the 2.0 proposed nursing positions and expressed concern about one school being uncovered for half a day, questioning how that would work. She emphasized the increasing complexity of health care in schools, including mental health needs, overflow into nurses' offices, and medical technology requirements. She stressed that leaving a school uncovered is not ideal and believes a better solution is needed.

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by: C.Rivers
Motion to adjourn.
Second: M.Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

Chair Antonacci adjourned the meeting at 6:44 PM

Respectfully submitted,

AFratoni

Alyssa Fratoni
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent